



FACT SHEET

What Pet Owners Should Know About Monkeypox

The Disease

Monkeypox is a rare viral disease caused by monkeypox virus. The virus can spread from animals to humans (and sometimes from human to human). In humans, monkeypox causes fever, headache, backache, and swollen lymph nodes, followed by a blister-like rash. In some cases, monkeypox can be fatal.

Origins

Monkeypox is found mostly in central and western Africa. The illness was first noted in monkeys in 1958, which is why it was named monkeypox. However, other animals can get monkeypox too. The first cases of monkeypox in humans were seen in 1970.

Monkeypox in the United States

In early June 2003, monkeypox was reported among several people in the United States. This is the first outbreak of human monkeypox in the United States. Most of these people became ill after having contact with pet prairie dogs that were sick. It appears that these prairie dogs might have gotten the virus from animals brought in from Africa to be sold as pets. The imported animals include Gambian giant rats, rope squirrels, dormice, and other small mammals.

There is concern that monkeypox might have spread more broadly to other animals housed together in pet stores, other animal facilities, and "pet swap" meets. CDC has issued guidelines for pet owners so that they can be on the lookout for monkeypox symptoms (see below).

Could Your Pet Have Monkeypox?

Public health experts are looking for signs of monkeypox in "exotic mammalian pets," including prairie dogs, Gambian giant rats, and rope squirrels. However, other animals that have been in contact with infected members of these species could be of concern also. The first exposure to ill animals was reported to have happened on or after April 15, 2003. If you acquired an exotic mammalian pet (or if your pet was exposed to an ill exotic mammalian pet) on or after April 15 and is now sick, it is possible they might have monkeypox.

Symptoms to Look For

Symptoms of monkeypox in animals that have been observed in this outbreak include:

- fever
- cough
- discharge from the eyes (eyes may appear cloudy or crusty)
- swelling in the limbs from enlarged lymph nodes
- a bumpy or blister-like rash.

Pets that have monkeypox also may appear to be very tired and may not be eating or drinking.

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If You Think Your Pet Has Monkeypox

If your pet could have been exposed to a sick animal and is showing the symptoms of monkeypox, follow these instructions:

- Separate the animal from people and other animals immediately. (Lock it in a room or put it in a cage or cardboard box well apart from others, such as in the garage.)
- Wash your hands well after contact with the animal and any object that may be contaminated with virus.
- Inform your state or local health department that you think you have a pet with monkeypox. The health department may pick up the animal, or they may tell you to take the animal to a vet.
- Do **not** release your pet into the wild. If it is infected, this could spread the disease to other animals and people. It is very important that this disease be contained.
- Do **not** leave your pet at a shelter. Again, this could spread the disease.
- Do **not** take your pet to a vet without calling first. The vet must take precautions to receive your pet.

When taking your pet to the vet you should:

- Call your vet before you go and tell them you think your pet may have monkeypox (this way they can follow procedures to keep themselves and others from getting sick.)
- Only one person should travel with the pet, to keep exposure to the pet to a minimum.
- If possible, put the pet in a cage and place the cage in a cardboard box with a few air holes.
- Separate the pet from the driver as much as possible.
- Later, clean any surfaces in the car that the animal, its secretions, or its cage, may have come in contact with and wash your hands thoroughly.

After taking your sick pet to the vet, you'll need to clean the household areas where it lived. Follow these instructions:

- Contaminated surfaces, such as floors and furniture, should be cleaned and disinfected using standard household cleaners according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Wash any clothing or other fabric that may have come in contact with the sick pet in warm water with detergent. You can use bleach in the wash cycle as an extra precaution. Be careful when handling the laundry and do not shake it.
- Food dishes, cages, and other items that may have had contact with the pet should be washed in hot water with dishwashing detergent.
- If the animal's bedding is not washable, call your local or state health department to find out how to do this. Follow their instructions for disposal of potentially contaminated materials.
- When you are done, wash your hands thoroughly.
- Do **not** throw any potentially contaminated materials away in the trash or at a dump or landfill. This could spread the disease.

Laundry (e.g., bedding, towels, clothing) may be washed in a standard washing machine with warm water and detergent; bleach may be added but is not necessary. Care should be used when handling soiled laundry to avoid direct contact with contaminated material. Soiled laundry should not be shaken or otherwise handled in a manner that may aerosolize infectious particles.

Pet Quarantine

If your pet has potentially been exposed to monkeypox, but is not showing symptoms of the disease, it still needs to be watched for signs of illness. Exposure is defined as living in the same house with, or coming from the same pet store or other pet facility as, an animal known to have monkeypox. Your pet

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must be observed for 30 days to be certain it is not infected. This can be done in the home. Follow these instructions:

- Put your pet in a room with a closed door and keep it away from all other animals and people for 30 days.
- Limit time spent with the pet. Do not handle the pet. Ask your vet for advice about protecting yourself when caring for your pet.
- After feeding or otherwise caring for the animal, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and hot water.
- If the animal gets sick during the 30 days, contact your local or state health department for instructions.
- During this 30-day period, watch your own health and the health of family members carefully for signs of monkeypox. If you or someone you have been in close contact with develops a fever, headache, backache, swollen lymph nodes, or a rash, contact your health-care provider immediately.
- If you have a weakened immune system for any reason, do not care for or come into contact with the potentially infected pet. (Cancer treatment, an organ transplant, HIV infection, primary immune deficiency disorders, some severe autoimmune disorders, and medications to treat autoimmune disorders and other illnesses can weaken the immune system.)

If it is too difficult to meet the requirements of home quarantine, contact your local or state health department for advice on other options.

For help in contacting your local or state health department, visit www.cdc.gov/other.htm#states.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/ncidod/monkeypox or call the CDC public response hotline at (888) 246-2675 (English), (888) 246-2857 (Español), or (866) 874-2646 (TTY)